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TRANSLITERACY AT A TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY – AN INSTITUTION-WIDE COLLABORATION IN PRACTICE

Abstract

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When first year students enroll they enter the world of academic study and research. After several years of teaching Information Literacy we found that students require skills that go beyond finding, evaluating and using information and are best described with the term “transliteracy”.

Transliteracy in our sense comprises the skills to move confidently through the whole life cycle of learning and research: planning a project, gathering and evaluating information, storing and managing, using and reusing it, sharing and publishing – across a wide range of possible formats, media types, platforms and devices. It also means that there isn't anything like a defined set of skills students and staff need but – on the contrary – they face a lifelong learning process where everything changes at a rapid pace. Tomorrow's digital information infrastructure will be different from today's and we should have the ability to adapt and use it for our purposes.

Transliteracy in this sense is difficult to be integrated into a strict curriculum with seminars, lectures or workshops. It weaves into learning and work, everywhere and at any time. Our students and staff need bits and pieces of information depending on their work or task at a given moment. Over time their needs change when they make progress in their academic career. Some of them might wish to attend one of our face-to-face courses in the library when they enter university but in their later studies they might need information just in time and wherever they are.

With this understanding of transliteracy as a starting point I would like to address three issues:

1. Elements of Transliteracy (TUM transliteracy project)
2. Just in time and just in place: teaching and learning methods
3. Collaboration at TUM

1. TUM Transliteracy Project: Elements of Transliteracy

To find out more about our clients' information behavior and the needs of researchers and students we started a project on Transliteracy at TUM. About one year ago librarians of the University Library began to investigate systematically the routines and needs of their patrons regarding their information behavior.

It is hard to say what exactly a transliterate person needs to know or to be familiar with. In order to find out more we chose a twofold approach.

On one hand we started to collect information from our clients themselves. We began to carry out structured interviews with researchers. We asked them a range of questions such as: How do you work? How did the way you work change during the last 5 or 10 years? Which software do you use? Where and how do you meet your colleagues in a virtual environment and share your ideas? How do you keep up-to-date about your research area? Along with that we evaluate our face-to-face courses and ask participants for their feedback. What did they maybe miss, which topics do they find most important?

On the other hand we tried to find out which software, formats, and devices we consider crucial for study and research. What kind of information might students and researchers need from us, sooner or later during their academic career? What do we have to be familiar with ourselves in order to be able to teach it? We tried to define a specific pool of formats, devices, tools, software programmes etc. which we should know. For specific purposes and for specific user groups we can then choose what might be relevant for our clients. Our findings are taken as a starting point for the internal continuing education programme of the University Library.

Starting with the "Conversation prism" by Brian Solis¹ and JESS3 and other internet resources about 21st century skills we chose about 200 tools, formats, software and platforms. We are well aware that our choice cannot be comprehensive given the constant changes of the digital world. But nevertheless we all have to select among a lot of possibilities and we tried to define what we consider to be core knowledge.

We then asked information librarians to rate and classify the given items according to levels of relevance.

„A transliterate person should ...

1 – „... know about its existence.“

2 – „... know its basic functions.“

3 – „... be able to use this in detail and explain it.“

Or

0 – „... No knowledge necessary except for experts“

The formats, tools and platforms covered were for example:

Google	Mozilla Fire-fox	.zip	screenshot	Flickr	Skype
data storage	.xls	Creative Commons	.csv	Dropbox	GoogleDocs
rename files	.pdf	Open Source	.png	Doodle	SurveyMonkey
create pdf	.ppt	current awareness	Tablet-PCs	.bib	.asf
MS Office Word	Excel	Internet Explorer	BASE	.enl	.flv
search engines (general)	URL	Web of Science	Scirus	.ctv3	.eps
academic search engines	bibliometrics	h-index	impact factor	.tex	Hashtag

¹ <http://www.theconversationprism.com/>

Wikipedia	proxy-server	twitter	Alerting	WorldCat	Outlook
advanced search in Google	citavi	endnote	Mendeley	timetable software	URN
Google Scholar	reference management software in general	WIKI	Zotero	Facebook	URI
.txt	use e-learning material	Media sharing	permalink	Plugin	.avi
.doc/.docx	Open Access	Youtube	Internet Protocol	WebCam	Google+
e-mail	connect to WLAN	.tiff	.bmp	DOI	Google Chrome
details of different search engines	.rtf	.gif	.wav	Bing	Safari
be able to use e-tutorials	.html	storage formats	.wmv	Google Maps	PicasaWeb
convert data	.jpg	Smartphone	Widgets	Cloud Computing	Mindmapping-Software
MS Office Powerpoint	.mp3	QR-Code	Folksonomies	HTTP, HTTPS	OpenOffice-Produkte
AddBlock	.dot	Apps	eBook-Reader	Yahoo	Content management systems
know and understand the concept of Deep Web	Zip software	Semantic Web	Podcast	RSS	Wordcloud, Tagcloud
Mediaplayer	Screenshot software	(Social) Tagging	Data Rights Management	Blogs	SMTP

While our project is still very much in progress I want to present first findings:

However diverse the components of this list were - there was a high consistency in assessment of individual items among all experts who contributed so far.

About 40 topics were considered crucial for transliteracy by all information specialists, including for example detailed knowledge about search options of search engines, file management routines, connecting to wireless LAN, handling proxy configurations, storing and converting data, concepts of intellectual property right and Creative Commons, formats like .txt, .dot, .xls, .pdf, mp3, .jpg, etc. For these topics comprehensive knowledge and the ability to use and explain them were considered as necessary.

About 80 topics were considered of medium importance. Here we find a long list of Web 2.0 tools such as dropbox, doodle, LinkedIn, ResearchGate, Blogs, Twitter; we find familiarity with mobile devices, new technologies like QR-codes, apps, widgets and gadgets, formats like .enl and .tex. For these topics basic knowledge was considered as necessary. A student or researcher should know that there is something like dropbox and in case he needs it he knows where to download the software.

In the third and fourth section of the survey you find topics which we consider of minor relevance. Here you quickly get lost in the never-ending and quickly changing world of internet applications. Participants of the survey agreed that they are important for expert knowledge but not necessary for average users.

We would be very happy to get more feedback from information professionals, so I take the opportunity to leave some forms here.

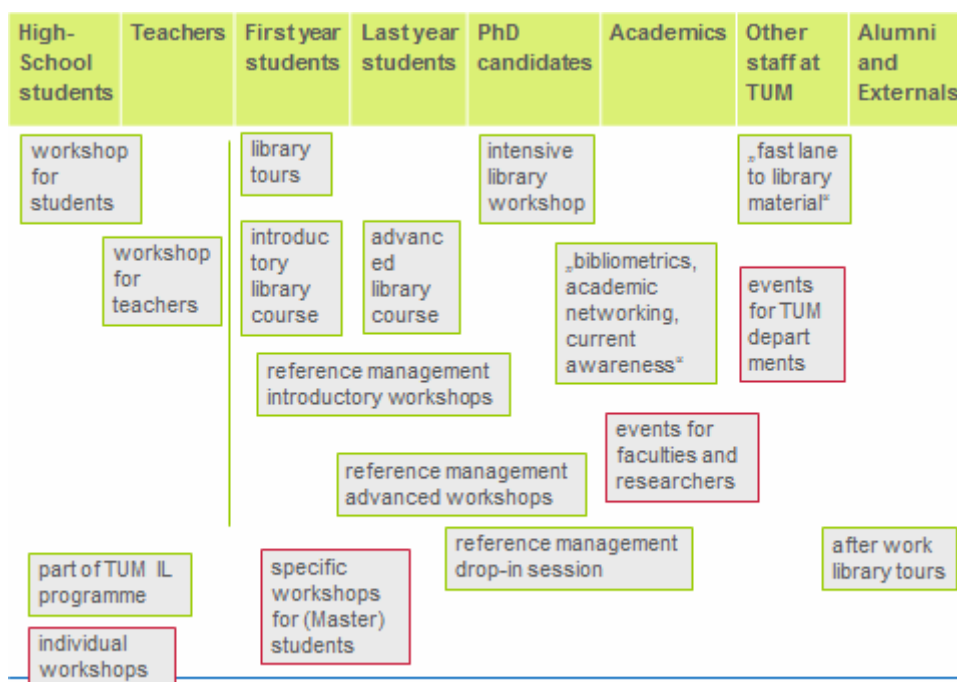
2. Just in time and just in place: Teaching and learning methods

Learning is an individual matter. Learning styles differ a lot and there isn't one ideal solution for every client. In short: We find that information services should be available just in time and just in place. To achieve this we follow two principles: a consistent modular design of all our courses and a focus on e-learning.

Modular design principle

The Library's course programme consists of modules which you can book according to your learning needs. A student starts with a guided tour that makes him familiar with library services and how to use them. He might then follow up with a course "Get ready for your study" (1, 5 hours) and learn how to search for library material and use document delivery services. Then he might go on with "Get ready for your exam!" (2 hours) where he learns how to search databases and cite correctly. Along with that he could choose Citavi or EndNote workshop for his reference management. Courses for Graduates concentrate on subject-specific search strategies and teach electronic publishing. Courses for academic staff offer insights on academic networking, academic profile management, bibliometrics, altmetrics and current awareness.

These courses don't overlap but complement each other. For specific needs, we offer individually tailored courses for student groups in collaboration with faculty staff responsible for study curricula.



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E-Learning

However efficient such a modular structure might be – there are strict limitations to its flexibility. Some students like hands-on training, others prefer to learn independently. And even with a modular structure you wouldn't want to attend a 2-hours-course if all you need is some very specific information.

e-learning is good for offering small bits of information and offering them wherever and whenever somebody might need it.

All our standard courses are offered as e-courses, too. An e-course is split up into a lot of small chapters, based on e-tutorials (text or film), how-to-explanations (walkthroughs) and so called tidbits which give you additional information. You find a comprehensive script of the course as well as self-study tests. Whenever you go to the Library's webpage and look for a special course you are invited to sign in for a face-to-face course or to start the respective e-course.



Join Classroom Course



Start eCourse

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An inventory with all e-learning material shows you which topics are covered. Besides, on the library's website there are links to e-learning-material where it might be useful in a given context.

eLearning by topics

[A](#)[B](#)[C](#)[D](#)[E](#)[F](#)[G](#)[H](#)[I](#)[J](#)[K](#)[L](#)[M](#)[N](#)[O](#)[P](#)[R](#)[S](#)[T](#)[W](#)[Z](#)

Topic ▲	Title	Format
Account	Your Account in the Online Catalogue	eTutorial (Film)
Activation	How to Activate EndNote Web and Synchronize It with EndNote Desktop	eTutorial (Film)
Advanced Course	Get Ready for Your Degree - Lecture Notes for the Advanced Library Workshop	Lecture Notes
Advanced Course	Get Ready for Your Degree - Lecture Notes for the Advanced Library Workshop	Lecture Notes
Advanced Search	Power Searching with Google (Entire Course)	eTutorial (Film)
Article Delivery Service	dokumenTUM - Inhouse Article Delivery Service for TUM Students and Staff	eTutorial (Film)
Bibliography	How to Read a Bibliography - Recognizing Document Types	eTutorial (Film)

Currently we are looking into different ways of Assessment so that we can certify participation for e-courses.

1. Collaboration at TUM

During the last years TUM University founded several services to support students and researchers alike in their life at University: language center, graduate schools, departments for teaching and learning in higher education, media center or the Munich Center for Technology in Society. They offer support for generic skills and knowledge, complementing the subject-specific course of study and work.

We found that Transliteracy in our sense goes beyond the limits of what a library can teach – involving career management, foreign languages, presentation skills, rhetoric or networking. Therefore we aim at integrating our services into the broader context and collaborate with support services and departments that we haven't been working together with so far.

On one hand we try to be present in the programme of other facilities whenever it comes to information literacy. On the other hand we refer our students to relevant facilities as well as they refer to us.

A few examples:

- As part of the library's cooperation with TUM graduate schools we contribute a session on academic networking for a workshop about career management for young researchers. Also library staff is present at kick-off and final seminars for graduate school courses.
- At their website the department for teaching and learning in higher education refers to the library's programme, and vice versa.
- Wherever possible library staff cooperates with faculties and offers embedded sessions in faculty curricula
- The University Library closely cooperates with the TUM center of professional training for TUM staff. The Library offers a workshop called "Fast lane to library material", an introductory workshop to information literacy and literature acquisition procedures. The library's course about bibliometrics and academic networking is also embedded into the TUM staff training programme.
- TUM founded a department for general education (Carl-von-Linde-Akademie, Munich Center for Technology in Society) which links to the library's programme, too. Especially our courses about reference management are attractive, as well as guided after-work library tours.
- Last but not least – the University management considers it important to build and maintain close relationships with alumni. The library regularly takes part in the alumni programme offering specialized guided tours through closed book stacks and branch libraries, with background information about library policies. The same applies to the TUM mentoring programme that links TUM alumni to nowadays students.

Summary

I started my presentation with our definition of Transliteracy: Transliteracy in our sense comprises the skills to move confidently through the whole life cycle of learning and research.

Taking the transliteracy project as a starting point we have three main concerns:

- Find out more about Transliteracy and be prepared for the requirements of our patrons
- Offer a programme which our patrons can use just in time and just in place
- Integrate our programme into an institution-wide collaboration for study and research support.

We try to focus consistently on the needs of our clients. What do they need? When and where do they need it? In the end we hope students and researchers feel supported by a comprehensive transliteracy programme which is aligned with their demands. And – last but not least – we are confident that they feel the University Library plays a central role in it.